

*Hinchey, DeGette and Polis Call on President to Endorse Stronger Protections from Hydraulic Fracturing, More Study Members Also Highlight New EIA Data on Lower Shale Gas Reserves in Response to the State of the Union Address*

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Congressman Jared Polis (D-CO) today asked President Obama to back stronger environmental and public health standards to protect against the risks of hydraulic fracturing. In a letter, the House members requested the President's support for the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals (FRAC) Act, which would require the disclosure of chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing natural gas extraction process. The legislation would also eliminate a special Safe Drinking Water Act exemption for hydraulic fracturing that was established in 2005.

Hinchey, DeGette and Polis also requested an expansion of the ongoing Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study of hydraulic fracturing, which Hinchey jumpstarted through legislation that was signed into law in 2010. The current plan does not include a study of air pollution and other health risks that have been closely associated with fracking. The members also pointed to new estimates from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, which call into question statistics on recoverable resources of U.S. shale gas cited by the President in his 2012 State of the Union address.

"The President has endorsed disclosure of fracking chemicals when they are used on public lands, but has not taken a position on if that same standard should be applied for all drilling that occurs throughout the country," said Hinchey. "Given the strong emphasis he placed on natural gas development in his State of the Union address, I am hopeful that the President will recognize a need to study this issue fully and enact protections of drinking water that would safeguard public health if fracking is to occur. We need him to take a firm position on the FRAC Act and direct the EPA to expand the current study."

"With hydraulic fracturing expanding across the country, it is more important than ever we ensure the economic benefits of natural gas do not come at the expense of the health and safety of our families," said Diana DeGette. "Therefore, today we urge President Obama to support our FRAC Act, as well as urge him to ensure the EPA has the resources necessary to complete a comprehensive study of the impact of fracking on our country."

"In Colorado, our public lands are central to our recreation economy, and I couldn't be more supportive of President Obama and Secretary Salazar's move to require drilling chemical disclosure on public lands. However, with drilling in Colorado increasingly happening next to suburban homes and schools, it's essential to disclose fracking chemicals anywhere they're used in order to protect the public's health in populated areas where those chemicals are most likely to affect our air, water and health."

Hinchey, DeGette and Polis are co-authors of the FRAC Act. The full text of their [letter](#) follows.

February 2, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We support your efforts to reduce our nation's reliance on foreign sources of energy and your commitment to making the United States the world leader in clean energy. You noted in your State of the Union address that accessing traditional domestic energy resources is also an important part of our energy portfolio, but it must be done in a way that protects the health and safety of our citizens. We couldn't agree more.

As members of Congress who have spent the last few years working together to improve the safety of natural gas drilling, we applaud your announcement that all companies that drill for gas on public lands will be required to disclose the chemicals they use. This an important step forward, but we believe more is required to protect the public from the risks posed by hydraulic fracturing. H.R. 1084, the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals Act (FRAC Act) of 2011, would expand the chemical disclosure requirement you endorsed for public lands to include all well sites across the country. This legislation would also ensure that hydraulic fracturing is no longer exempt from the protections of the Safe Drinking Water Act. As you continue working on our nation's energy policy, we strongly encourage you to endorse the

protections of the FRAC Act to help safeguard our drinking water resources.

In addition to having strong rules that protect the environment and public health, it is critical that you and your administration have the best information possible when making decisions about natural gas drilling. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is currently embarking on the first, independent and comprehensive study of the risks that hydraulic fracturing poses to drinking water. Unfortunately, media reports indicate that some in the oil and gas industry are seeking to narrow and even undermine this important study. This must not be allowed to happen. We urge you to maintain a strong commitment to the research that is under way by providing the necessary resources and support. We also urge you to consider expanding this research to cover hydraulic fracturing's impact on air quality and human health.

We also believe it's critical to have an accurate understanding of exactly how much shale gas lies beneath the surface. Much has been said about our country's potential supply of shale gas. Some in the industry have claimed we have an ocean of natural gas buried beneath our surface. Despite these claims, independent estimates about shale gas reserves reveal great uncertainty. In fact, just this week, the Energy Information Administration slashed its estimate of technically recoverable resources of U.S. shale gas by half. Furthermore, the United States Geological Survey's estimates released last year are even lower. This is an enormous swing and it should be a caution to those who claim these new shale gas fields are the silver bullet to our country's energy challenge. We must take care to ensure that any "bridge fuel," doesn't instead prove to be a bridge to nowhere.

As our nation faces the challenges of lessening our dependence on foreign sources of oil while transitioning to a cleaner energy future, we must be vigilant in ensuring that natural gas development is done in accordance with safe and environmentally sound standards. Should we fail to do this, we will pay a heavy price.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter. We look forward to working with you on an energy policy that fully safeguards the health and safety of all citizens.

Sincerely,

Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey

Rep. Diana DeGette

Rep. Jared Polis